THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

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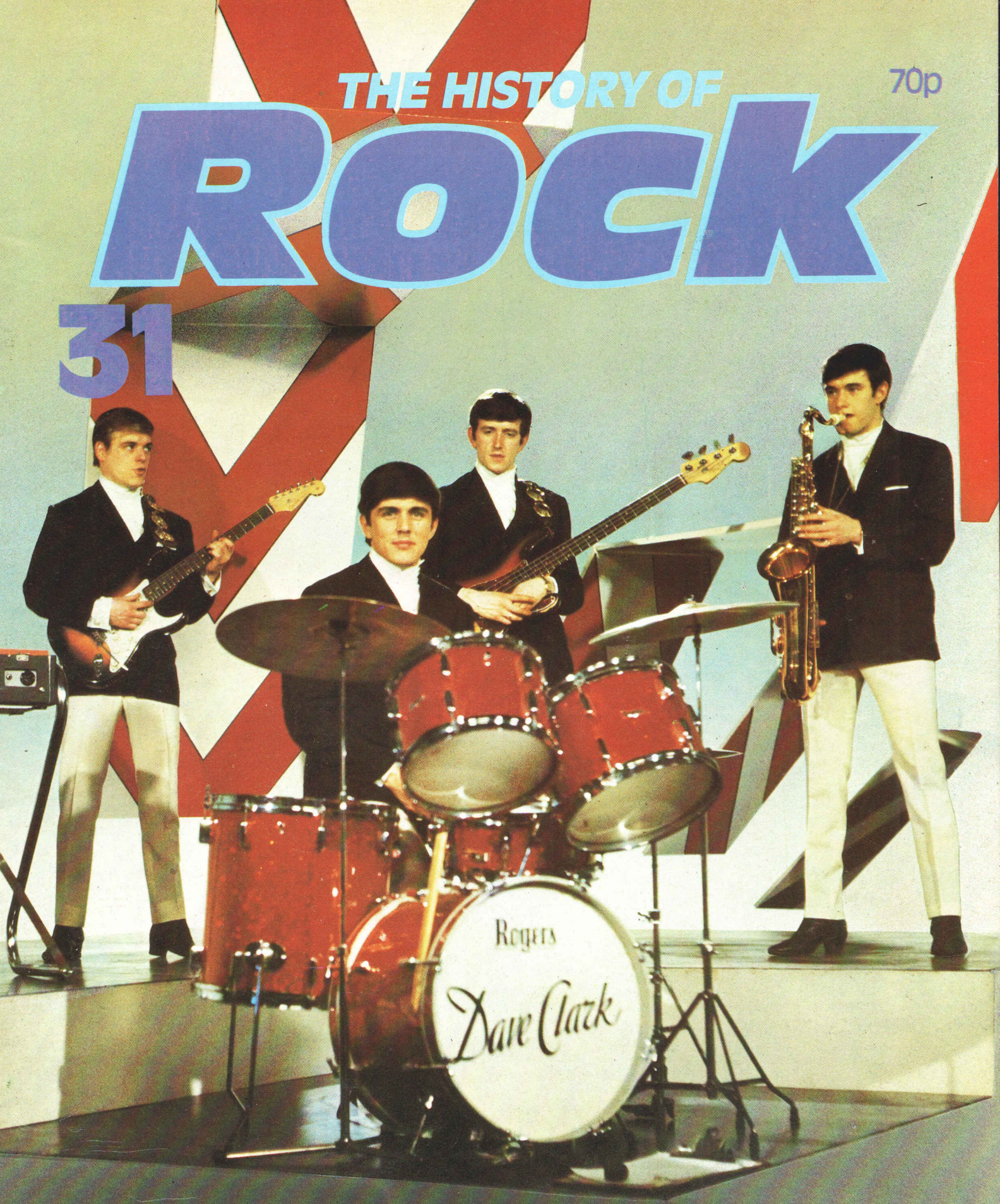

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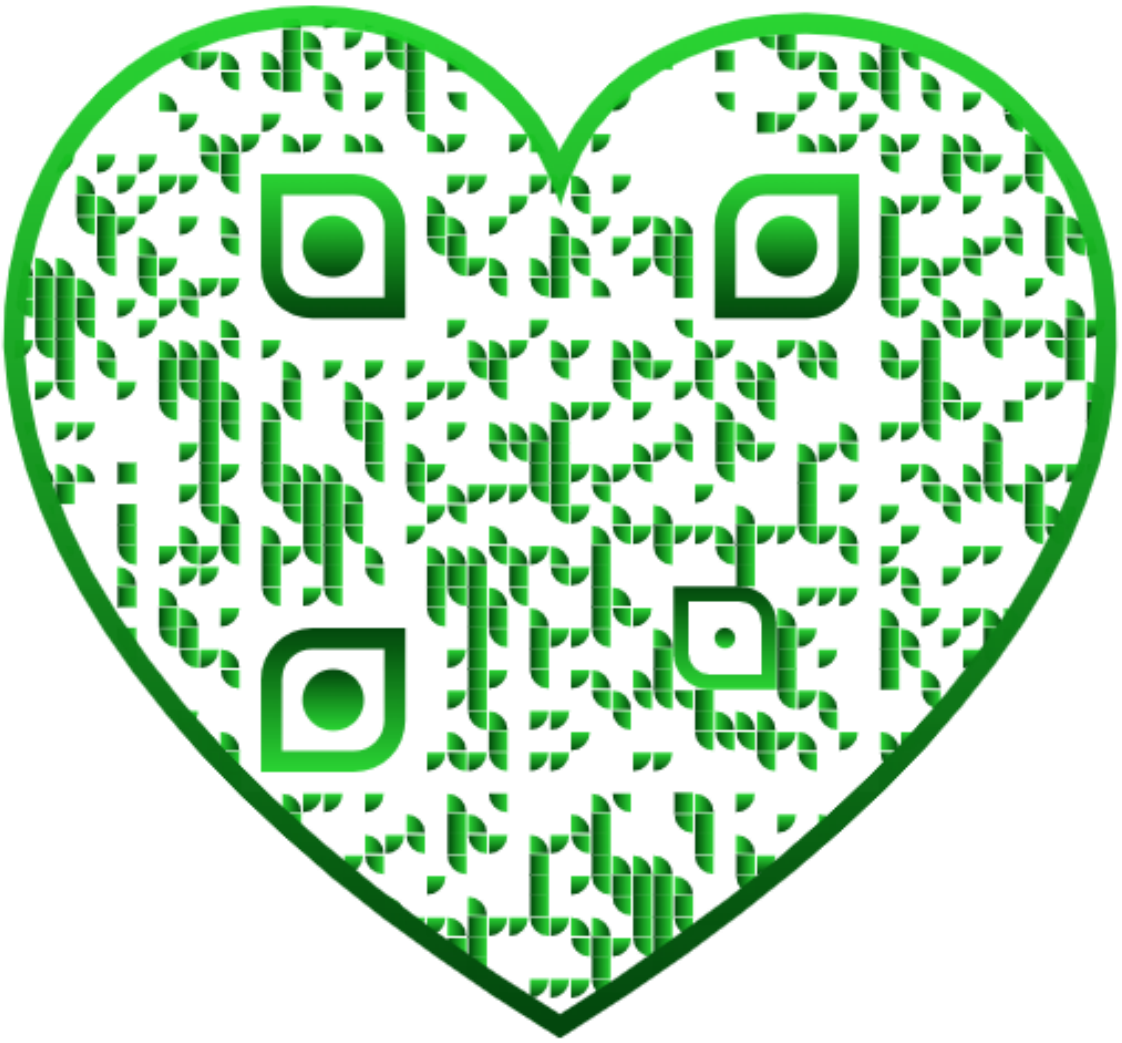

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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Beat rules UK?

By 1964 the whole of the United Kingdom was shaking to a new beat

THE DRAMATIC RISE of the Beatles from early 1963 onwards transformed the British record industry's attitude to provincial pop music. Prior to the Beatles' success, the record companies had felt neither the need nor the inclination to scout for talent beyond the Home Counties. Any group or singer wishing to embark upon a serious pop career was obliged to come to London, where the record labels, the agents and the recording studios were all based. Few groups in the provincial cities were either willing or able to make such a move: most were amateur or semi-professional and therefore preferred to stay in their home patch, keeping their daytime jobs and playing to a known audience. Apart from the Shadows and one or two other instrumental outfits, no *group* had ever made much impression on the British pop scene anyway, so the prospect of fame seemed too remote for provincial groups to contemplate.

Once the Beatles had broken through, the thoughts of recording executives instantly turned to finding their own Beatle lookalikes. This amounted to simple commercial expediency rather than any sudden recognition of the potential of northern artists. Even at the height of the Merseybeat craze, most A&R men remained totally ignorant of the special nature of local beat scenes and their lack of understanding meant that very few of the Liverpool groups transferred successfully to record. Nevertheless, the Liverpool scene was raided mercilessly by record companies – Pye signed the Searchers, Decca took the Big Three and the Mojos, Fontana claimed the Merseybeats, while most of the Epstein stable were placed with EMI subsidiaries – and the pattern was set for the exploitation of the Manchester beat circuit that followed soon after with comparable success.

Merseyside, meanwhile, never quite recovered from that sudden burst of interest: as Bill Harry, editor of *Mersey Beat*, wrote, 'Britain saw a major city's talent drained, leaving no inspiration for the groups remaining . . . so major had Liverpool's contribution to music been that a resentment developed and Liverpool became such a dirty word that groups, no matter how talented, found it almost impossible to gain support from the people who could project their talent.'

Beat group music was not peculiar to Liverpool, although the Merseyside version had certain local characteristics. Beat's antecedents lay in the skiffle craze of 1956-1957, when Lonnie Donegan and others had pioneered the idea of home-made, do-it-yourself music and had sent sales of acoustic guitars soaring. Skiffle in itself was too limiting to last, and the more serious guitar-players turned increasingly to American rock 'n'roll, whose key propagators like Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran provided a model for progress, then the ending of hire-purchase restrictions in 1960 made not only electric guitars but drum kits and amplifiers – previously way out of most teenagers' price range – more widely available.

The birth of beat

The beat-group sound was determined by this instrumentation and crystallised in different ways from city to city, depending on local circumstances. Beat was in part a local response to the lack of excitement in mainstream British pop, a kind of locally-produced alternative. Most beat groups sprang up simply to fill a need – youth clubs, school dances, local coffee bars all needed 'live' music of some kind for their teenage customers to dance to. The constant gigging imbued the groups with a sense of professionalism and enabled them to develop their skills to a fairly high level of competence well before they were signed by record companies.

At the heart of their appeal, however, was their status within a teenage community;

The Nashville Teens from Weybridge, Surrey, whose Home Counties brand of R&B-based rock led to the hits 'Tobacco Road' and 'Google Eye' in 1964.

like provincial football teams, the youngsters' progress was religiously followed by a hard-core of local fans who remembered the boys in the band from school, college or factory shop-floor. Inevitably, many of the fans felt somewhat betrayed when their heroes finally did make the big time and deserted their home towns for London.

The Manchester sound

Most cities and towns in Britain had their own groups, though only in specific areas were local beat scenes particularly well developed. The number of groups in a locality depended entirely on the number and nature of venues available, so ports like Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle (with more pubs and clubs per square mile than anywhere else) became major growth areas. Manchester was, in fact, the first city to attract national attention after the Merseybeat fad began, when Freddie and the Dreamers, the Hollies and Herman's Hermits were all signed by London labels in quick succession. The city's proximity to Liverpool made it an obvious next target for recording managers, and what they found was a proliferation of groups and venues that rivalled Liverpool's in both size and quality.

Above far right: The Applejacks, a Birmingham group that had its major success in 1964. Above right: The Paramounts, seen here on a publicity stunt, were a product of Southend's thriving beat scene. Below: Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers represented Clacton, another popular holiday resort.

Manchester had no *Mersey Beat* newspaper to keep the kids informed of when and where the groups were playing, no Brian Epstein to groom the leading groups for eventual stardom. Consequently, the city's music scene lacked the sense of communal identity that was to be found in Liverpool. What Manchester could claim, however, was a very professionally-run club circuit and a catchment area of fans that took in parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire. The city also had a long-standing reputation as the entertainment capital of the north, being the home of one of the country's biggest leisure corporations – Granada, which had interests in everything from television to bingo.

Manchester's solid tradition of entertainment may partly explain why its beat groups fared much better in the long term than their Liverpool rivals. While only the Beatles managed to keep the Merseybeat flag flying in the charts after 1965, the Hollies, Herman's Hermits and the Mindbenders all enjoyed lasting success. Common to each was an easy professionalism and an amenability to the suggestions of their respective recording managers. All were given excellent material to record, much of it from the pen of a local songwriter named Graham Gouldman. Even more than the groups themselves, perhaps, he typified Manchester beat's sense of craftmanship within the mainstream pop style.

A former member of the Mockingbirds and the Whirlwinds, Gouldman was the closest Britain came to producing its own one-man Goffin and King. His list of hits for fellow Mancunians included 'No Milk Today', 'Listen People' (both for Herman's Hermits), 'Bus Stop' and 'Look Through Any Window' (for the Hollies). With ex-Mindbender Eric Stewart and former Whirlwinders Lol Creme and Kevin Godley, Gouldman formed 10cc in 1972 and kept the Manchester tradition of superbly crafted pop alive for a further decade, much of it coming from their Strawberry Studios.

Commercially Manchester's pop impact was vast, though its groups were hardly innovators. The Hollies proved themselves to be astute pop survivors, adapting easily to each subsequent change in taste, and Freddie and the Dreamers – always most popular with very young audiences – quickly left the chart scene behind to enter the world of children's television and pantomime appearances. Herman's Hermits, essentially a vehicle for the sweet voice and pretty, boyish looks of lead singer Peter Noone, were second only to the Beatles in popularity in America yet never outgrew their pop beginnings. Other local names – Wayne Fontana, his backing group the Mindbenders, St Louis Union and the Four Pennies from Blackburn – suffered a similar fate.

The scene spreads

At first, the beat music phenomenon seemed to be confined to the north-west as a string of Liverpool and Manchester groups made their chart debuts. The record industry was not slow, however, in exploring the potential of other areas.

Birmingham was an early target, with Decca and Piccadilly signing two of the city's most obviously commercial groups, the Applejacks and the Rockin' Berries, in 1964. Both had sizeable chart hits – with 'Tell Me When' and 'He's In Town' respectively – and their success was matched by that of a number of other Midlands groups, including the Sorrows, Pinkerton's Assorted Colours, the Moody Blues and the Spencer Davis Group. By 1965, there was much optimistic talk about the 'Brum Beat' taking over from Merseybeat – a music paper called *Midland Beat* was even launched – but generally the group scene there lacked cohesion.

The problem was that the Birmingham scene was still very much in its infancy, having grown in strength *after* the Merseybeat boom rather than parallel to it. The full fruits of the Midland beat explosion were felt during and after 1967, when the Move and Idle Race emerged. Both groups had been formed from the remnants of such pioneering Birmingham bands as Mike Sheridan and the Nightriders and Carl Wayne and the Vikings. Other notable Birmingham musicians to make their mark in later years included Steve Winwood, who formed Traffic with Dave Mason, and top drummer Carl Palmer.

Locally unique 'sounds', in fact, tended to exist only in the imaginations of record company publicists. The Dave Clark Five, for instance, were applauded as creators of a so-called Tottenham sound when 'Glad All Over' reached Number 1 late in 1963, though the only particularly distinctive feature of their records was the heavy, almost military drum rhythms.

The majority of the post-Beatles bands – of whom the Dave Clark Five were a very typical example – had a uniformity of style, playing a traditional mixture of rock'n'roll standards, current chart hits and possibly a few of their own compositions. Only a few became anything more than one-hit wonders, although those very same one-off hits did illustrate the record industry's new acceptance of provincial music and the profits it could make.

Every town seemed to enjoy its brief moment of glory between 1965 and 1966, as local boys made good in the national world of pop – the Troggs from Andover, the Paramounts from Southend, the Naturals from Harlow, the Barron Knights from Dunstable, the Nashville Teens from Weybridge, the Poets and Lulu and the Luvvers from Glasgow, the Zombies from St Albans, Unit Four Plus Two from Hertford and many more.

Blues and beat

British beat music was finally superseded by R&B, the very style from which the groups had drawn their initial inspiration. The R&B movement was largely London-based and had a strongly intellectual following, although many of its leading bands – the Rolling Stones, the Pretty Things and Manfred Mann included – seemed happy to straddle both musical camps. The attraction of R&B for musicians was that it allowed them a range of expression, the freedom to improvise and follow their own musical paths, that was denied them in commercial pop.

The second generation of British rock groups – those emerging around 1965 – tended to take their cue from the new R&B bands, most notably the Rolling Stones. Some were straight Stones imitators, just as some of the beat bands had been little more than Beatles copyists, but a few developed their own individual styles, modifying their R&B sound to suit the growing pop audience and writing material that specifically related to the British pop experience.

Such groups as the Who, the Small Faces and the Kinks all fell into this category, though it is doubtful whether any of them would have made their initial breakthrough without the impetus of the British beat explosion behind them. For British beat proved to be the starting point for many of the developments in pop music during the mid to late Sixties. More than this, beat music – for all its limitations – represented the first true flowering of a uniquely British pop music.

STEPHEN BARNARD

The Four Pennies seemed set to make it big during the wave of enthusiasm for Manchester bands, but like so many of the beat groups that shot to fame in 1963 and 1964 their success was short-lived.

HITS IN HARMONY

How the Hollies found the secret of success

BETWEEN 1963 AND 1970 the Hollies had more British hits than any other group but the Beatles. More than the Rolling Stones or the Kinks or Manfred Mann; twice as many as the Who, the Small Faces, the Animals, the Searchers or the Dave Clark Five; three times as many as the Yardbirds, the Move or the Troggs.

But the Hollies are not remembered as runners-up to the Beatles or even as the equals of half the bands they outsold. They were certainly less than legendary, yet they are still together in the Eighties. The Hollies had hits, but they had no headlines. They did not, of course, urinate against the walls of filling stations, refuse to ride the roundabout on 'Sunday Night At The London Palladium', outrage churchgoers or hairdressers, flout the Union Jack, wreck their equipment, insult officialdom, take drugs, get arrested. At least, not so anyone noticed. There were occasional personnel changes, but essentially the history of the Hollies is the story of their recording career, which began with the release of '(Ain't That) Just Like Me' on 17 May 1963.

Covering the Coasters

The Hollies line-up was: Allan Clarke (born 15 April 1942, vocals), Graham Nash (2 February 1942, rhythm guitar and harmony vocals), Tony Hicks (16 December 1943, guitar), Eric Haydock (3 February 1943, bass) and Don Rathbone (drums), although Rathbone was quickly replaced by Bobby Elliott (born 8 December 1942). They were formed in 1962 from the merger of two Manchester beat groups, the Deltas and the Dolphins, and their material was a rag-bag of rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues, similar to dozens of groups from that city (and from Liverpool, only 30 miles away). As the record company A&R men plundered the north-west in the hope of finding another Beatles, the Hollies were signed – like the Beatles – to EMI's Parlophone label, where they were put under the supervision of staff producer Ron Richards.

Their first single, '(Ain't That) Just Like Me', was a cover of a Coasters song. Written by two members of the American group, Earl Carroll and Billy Guy, the song had been recorded some 18 months before at a time when the Coasters were clearly on the decline. The Hollies tackled it fast and perfunctorily, Allan Clarke singing the nursery rhyme lyric without humour to turn it into just another dance

Insets left: Hicks and Nash harmonise during a BBC recording (top): the group rocking in roll-necks at the Cavern Club (centre), and with blond-haired drummer Bobby Elliott (bottom). Opposite: The Hollies go hippy in an attempt to cultivate a 'serious' image. 1968 saw a return to pop and plainer threads.

Above: The Hollies promote 'Searchin' ', their second single, on a 'Thank Your Lucky Stars' TV show of September 1963.

number, the intention emphasised by a cry of 'Ah, shake now!' before the instrumental break. The vocal harmonies, which were to become a trademark of the group, were absent and this added to the anonymity of their performance.

Although the record failed to make the charts, the group chose another Coasters song for their second release. 'Searchin' ', however, had a better pedigree. An American Top Five hit in 1957, it had been written by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, whose compositions provided British groups of the early Sixties with a string of standards. The Hollies approached 'Searchin' ' at a more appropriate pace than that of its predecessor, but vocally made the song less of a novelty than the original version. 'Searchin' ' was released on 23 August and entered the Top Twenty five weeks later, reaching Number 12 in October 1963.

Their third release, 'Stay', in November was another cover, and – unlike the previous two songs – had actually been a big hit in Britain (as well as a US Number 1) for Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs in 1960. But where Williams' exhortations to 'Stay – just a little bit longer' had conveyed sexual intent, the Hollies' breezy harmonies and the frenetic tempo of their treatment removed any ambivalence from the invitation to 'have another dance'. By the end of the year 'Stay' was well on its way to the Top Ten and was still in the charts when 'Just One Look' was issued on 21 February 1964.

Doris Troy's version of the song had been in the US Top Twenty only six months before, but had not taken off in Britain. It suited the Hollies' rapidly evolving sound to perfection. Allan Clarke's vocal was supported throughout by Graham Nash's keening harmony, and the one solo passage was sung by Nash (who had previously taken a brief vocal solo on 'Searchin' '). 'Just One Look' became the Hollies biggest hit so far, being kept from the Number 1 spot only by the Beatles' 'Can't Buy Me Love'.

Original cuts

In June the Hollies were back in the Top Five with 'Here I Go Again', their fourth hit in less than a year. The Hollies' sound was by now as instantly recognisable as the Beatles', yet none of the group's singles had been an original composition. The pattern changed with the release of 'We're Through' in September 1964, both sides of the record being credited to L. Ransford; this was a pseudonym for the songwriting trio of Clarke, Hicks and Nash, all three of whom had had a hand in earlier B-sides.

The Nash/Clarke songs on the flip of the first two singles had displayed the unmistakeable influence of Buddy Holly, while 'Keep Off That Friend Of Mine' (Hicks/Elliott) was more typical of the forgettable throwaways that regularly accompanied hit A-sides before the Beatles showed that two good songs could belong on the same disc. However, 'Baby That's All' (Ransford/Lee) on the back of 'Here I Go Again' would arguably have done well in the charts on its own.

'We're Through' introduced another important element into the Hollies' sound: a gimmicky guitar, in this case a repetitive figure played on an acoustic. On subsequent singles Tony Hicks would employ a variety of techniques and instruments, most memorably the banjo on 'Stop Stop Stop'. Consistently underrated as a player, Hicks' contribution to every record was arguably as distinctive as the voices of Clarke and Nash.

Although 'We're Through' did almost as well as their two previous releases, reaching Number 7 in October, the compositions of Clarke, Hicks and Nash (who continued to write as Ransford until 1966) were relegated once more to the B-side of their singles, where they earned equal royalties but went unheard. Ironically, when the trio did next write an A-side,

'Stop Stop Stop', issued in October 1966, its insistent melody line was a reworking of their earlier song 'Come On Back', the flip of 'We're Through'.

Stateside connection

The Hollies' next two A-sides came from America. 'Yes I Will' released in January 1965) was written by Gerry Goffin and Russ Titelman. Reminiscent of the Beatles, it was the smoothest song the group had recorded, allowing their now-sophisticated harmonies to take full flight and giving them another UK Top Ten hit. 'I'm Alive' (May 1965) was written by Clint Ballard Jr, whose 'Game Of Love' had been recorded earlier in the year by Wayne Fontana and made Number 2 in the UK and Number 1 in the States. If the Hollies hoped his song might provide a US chart breakthrough they were wrong, but they could hardly have been disappointed for 'I'm Alive' gave them their first UK Number 1 in June.

'I'm Alive' showcased the new Hollies sound. The vocals now predominated in the mix, much as the Beatles' harmonies had been subtly and increasingly promoted by George Martin. Hicks, Clarke and Nash made a formidable vocal team, with the latter's exhilaratingly high-pitched voice the most distinctive feature.

The reasons for the Hollies' lack of success in America were not obvious, since the US had already capitulated in the face of the invasion by British groups and several lesser talents had dented the Top Twenty at least once. Possibly the lack of an identity as unique as their impact on record was to blame, because even in Britain their popularity was due entirely to their sound rather than their image. Despite the boots and trendy suits, the Hollies were less than fashionable; and Hicks and Nash even persisted in brushing back their hair when floppy fringes were the thing.

The group's next single finally did get them a modest American hit, although 'Look Through Any Window' (released in August 1965) made only Number 32 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred. This unabashed, almost fussy pop song was co-written by Graham Gouldman, who had recently provided the Yardbirds with their first hits, and reached the Number 4 slot in the UK in October.

As if to furnish proof that the group was far from established in the US charts, 'If I Needed Someone' was a disaster by the Hollies' standards on both sides of the Atlantic; this rather imitative version of a George Harrison composition managed to prop up the Top Twenty for just a single week in January 1966. Harrison himself criticised the group's version of the *Rubber Soul* album track, and it was generally agreed that it lacked the Hollies' usual panache. For their next release the group returned to a safer pop formula with the strident 'I Can't Let Go', which made Number 2 in the UK charts and sneaked briefly into the American Top Fifty.

Bus Stop take-off

Songwriter Graham Gouldman knew 'Bus Stop' was right for the Hollies as soon as he had finished it. He played it to Graham Nash backstage at a Hollies concert where his own group was the support act, and Nash immediately agreed. They were both correct. Released on 17 June 1966, it made the Top Five on both sides of the Atlantic, appearing in the US on the Imperial label. Gouldman went on to write a succession of hits for a variety of artists before joining 10cc in 1972, but the Hollies didn't use another of his songs. In fact, for the next two years they didn't use anyone's songs but their own. Bassist Eric Haydock had been replaced by ex-Dolphin Bernie Calvert earlier in 1966, and this line-up was to produce the Hollies' classic songs in the next five years.

Above: 1966-style Hollies, from left Bobby Elliott, Graham Nash, Allan Clarke, Tony Hicks and Bernie Calvert. Below: Publicising 1967's Butterfly *LP.*

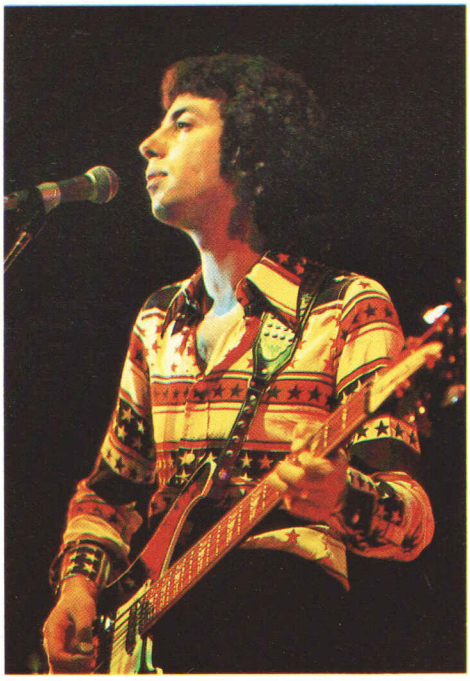
'Bus Stop' was a succinct narrative song and Clarke, Hicks and Nash adopted this device to brilliant effect in writing 'Stop Stop Stop', an amusing vignette of a punter's passion for a belly dancer, the atmosphere heightened by Hicks' exotic banjo. The Hollies' seventh Top Five hit in Britain, it also made Number 7 in the United States.

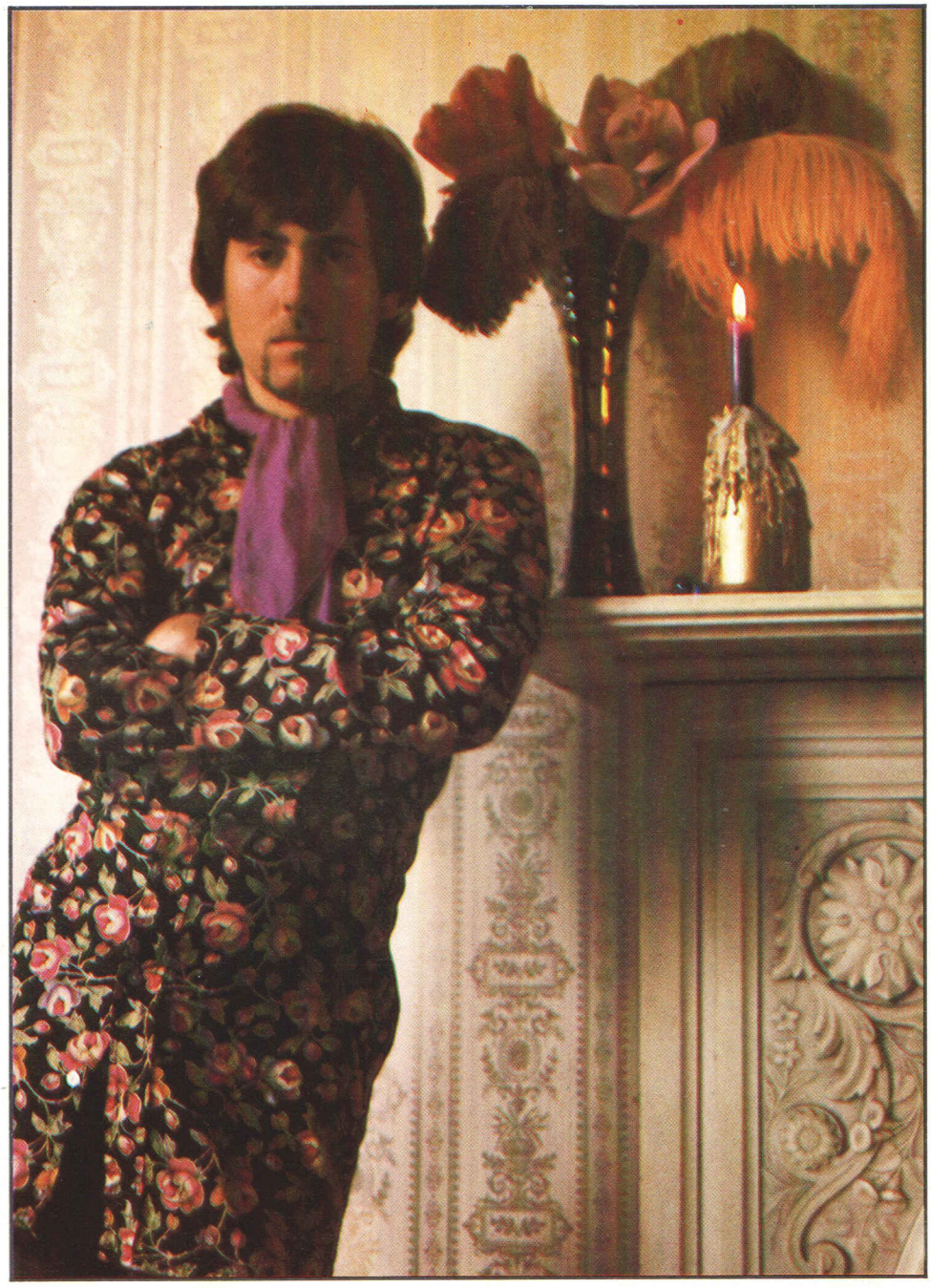
Formula hits

The year 1967 marked a change in direction for many groups that had started in the early Sixties. Encouraged initially by the Beatles, some began making stylistic experiments, while Bob Dylan's influence affected their approach to lyrics. The three-minute single, of which the Hollies were masters, was a less effective medium for these new concerns than an album, but the Hollies were reluctant to abandon their hold on the singles charts, in spite of the loftier ambitions of Graham Nash in particular. Two albums that year, *Evolution* and *Butterfly*, contained material and

musical ideas that would undoubtedly have allowed another group to make the transition from pop to rock, but the Hollies' attempts at progression found neither a new audience nor the approval of their old fans.

Two interesting singles, 'On A Carousel' (with its contemporary B-side 'All The World Is Love') and 'Carrie-Anne', proved that the Hollies could combine enterprise with a familiar format and commercial success – both being among their biggest-selling records on each side of the Atlantic. Nash was now indisputably the dominant creative force and the next release, 'King Midas In Reverse' (September 1967), was his masterpiece. Beginning with his voice over an acoustic guitar, the sound swelled to an ambitious orchestral crescendo, but the record lacked the Hollies' usual ebullience and its imaginative theme proved unfortunately prophetic when the record rose no higher than the UK Number 18 position.





Above: Songwriter Graham Gouldman gave the Hollies hits with 'Look Through Any Window' and 'Bus Stop'. Above right: Graham Nash contemplates his departure from the band. Below: A short-lived early Seventies line-up featured Swedish vocalist Mikael Rickfors (centre)

Its failure was made more poignant by the subsequent success of the sweet 'Jennifer Eccles' and Nash's disenchantment was increased by a decision to record an album of Bob Dylan songs, *Hollies Sing Dylan* (1969), against his wishes. By the end of 1968 he had quit the group to form a trio in America with David Crosby and Steve Stills.

The Hollies recruited Terry Sylvester, formerly of the Swinging Blue Jeans, to supply the harmonies and reverted to outside writers. The hits continued, but at a much slower pace; five UK chart entries

resulted from the years 1968-71. 'Sorry Suzanne' (1969), 'I Can't Tell The Bottom From The Top' and 'Gasoline Alley Bred' (both 1970) and 'Hey Willy' (1971) were all written – singly or in combination – by Roger Cook, Roger Greenaway, Tony Macauley and Geoff Stephens, the 'new Tin Pan Alley' team behind the success of Blue Mink, the Drifters, the Foundations and others.

The fifth hit, 1969's 'He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother', was a Bobby Russell-Bobby Scott composition and inspired a host of cover versions from middle-of-the-road performers in the following decade. An impressive ballad, it featured then-sessionman Elton John. His verdict on the proceedings – 'when I played piano on "He Ain't Heavy" they thought they were making art. I was just having a good time!' – betrayed, perhaps, that what had once come naturally to the Hollies was now approaching artifice.

> 'We made the hit medley single ['Holliedaze'] with the original tapes, put in a drum machine and there it was in the charts! Then we asked Graham Nash if he'd like to come back to do the television appearances and now we're recording a new album with him . . . there's been a lot of mileage out of the nostalgia thing. We've not really thought about writing together again – we have a new keyboard player, Paul Bliss, who's writing some fabulous stuff . . . we've always gone for a good song.'
>
> **Tony Hicks** of the Hollies, 1982

Recorded in 1971, 'Long Cool Woman' failed to reach the UK Top Thirty – but it became the group's biggest seller in the US and reached Number 2 in 1972. Its popularity with Stateside audiences may have owed something to the chunky rhythm guitar so reminiscent of Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Polydor days

In 1971, Clarke left for a solo career which was as unsuccessful as his replacement Mikael Rickfors' stint with the Hollies. Rickfors was a Swede who spoke virtually no English. Despite this, the line-up recorded a single, 'The Baby' (a 1972 UK Number 26 hit); the sound was not unfamiliar but the problems were obvious and the newcomer returned to obscurity. Clarke was back two years later for 'The Day That Curly Billy Shot Crazy Sam McGee' (1973) and 'The Air That I Breathe' (1974), a ballad that took the Hollies to Number 2 in the UK and Number 6 in the US. By this time, the group's long-standing connection with EMI had been severed, their records now being released on the Polydor label.

The Hollies were among the first to record the compositions of Bruce Springsteen. Clarke had recorded the commercially-unreleased 'If I Were The Priest' on a solo album, following it with a version of 'Born To Run', recorded a year before Springsteen's own single. The Hollies (with Clarke) also cut a modestly-successful cover of 'Sandy' which scraped into the US Hot Hundred in 1975.

After almost a dozen years of chart entries – 25 in all – the hits finally dried up, though the Hollies continued to record throughout the Seventies. They added keyboards to their line-up, both live and for recording, with Pete Wingfield and Pete Arnesen the principal pianists.

Reunited with Graham Nash (left), the Hollies returned to British TV in 1981.

The Hollies appeared to be consigned to the groups' graveyard in cabaret, when 'Holliedaze', a slick confection of past hits squeezed onto a single, took off in 1981. Former fans who were surprised to see a grizzled Graham Nash back in the line-up for television appearances were even more astonished to learn later that he was back recording with the Hollies, now free of contractual obligations. The mythical L. Ransford was, it seemed, alive and well.

JOHN PIDGEON

THE HOLLIES
Discography (to 1972)

Singles
Just Like Me/Hey What's Wrong With Me (Parlophone R5030, 1963); Searchin'/Whole World Over (Parlophone R5052, 1963); Stay/Now's The Time (Parlophone R5077, 1963); Just One Look/Keep Off That Friend Of Mine (Parlophone R5104, 1964); Here I Go Again/Baby That's All (Parlophone R5137, 1964); We're Through/Come On Back (Parlophone R5178, 1964); Yes I Will/Nobody (Parlophone R5232, 1965); I'm Alive/You Know He Did (Parlophone R5287, 1965); Look Through Any Window/So Lonely (Parlophone R5322, 1965); If I Needed Someone/I've Got A Way Of My Own (Parlophone R5392, 1965); I Can't Let Go/Running Through The Night (Parlophone R5469, 1966); Bus Stop/Don't Run And Hide (Parlophone R5469, 1966); After The Fox/Foxtrot [With Peter Sellars] (United Artists UP1152, 1966); Stop Stop Stop/It's You (Parlophone R5508, 1966); On A Carousel/All The World Is Love (Parlophone R5562, 1967); Carrie-Anne/Signs That Will Never Change (Parlophone R5602, 1967); King Midas In Reverse/Everything Is Sunshine (Parlophone R5637, 1967); Jennifer Eccles/Open Up Your Eyes (Parlophone R5680, 1968); Listen To Me/Do The Best You Can (Parlophone R5733, 1968); Sorry Suzanne/Not That Way At All (Parlophone R5765, 1969); He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother/Cos You Like To Love Me (Parlophone R5806, 1969); I Can't Tell The Bottom From The Top/Mad Professor Blyth (Parlophone R5837, 1970); Gasoline Alley Bred/Row The Boat Together (Parlophone R5905, 1971); The Baby/Oh Granny (Polydor 2058, 199, 1972); Long Cool Woman In A Black Dress/Cable Car (Parlophone R5939, 1972).

EPs
The Hollies (Parlophone GEP 8909, 1964); *Just One Look* (Parlophone GEP 8911, 1964); *Here I Go Again* (Parlophone GEP 8915, 1964); *We're Through* (Parlophone GEP 8927, 1964); *In The Hollies Style* (Parlophone GEP 8934, 1965); *I'm Alive* (Parlophone GEP 8942, 1965); *I Can't Let Go* (Parlophone GEP 8951, 1966).

Albums (selective)
Best Of The Hollies EPs (EMI NUTM30). (Includes: Come on Back, So Lonely, To You My Love, Just One Look.) *The Hollies' 20 Golden Greats* (EMI EMTV11) (Includes: The Air That I Breath, Carrie-Anne, Long Cool Woman In A Black Dress, I'm Alive, Stay). *The Best Of Allan Clarke* (Aura AUL 718) (Includes: Born To Run, Blinded By The Light, Shadow In The Street).

GLAD ALL OVER

Dave Clark made a fortune from bits and pieces

ALTHOUGH DAVE CLARK never claimed to be more than a functional musician – there were spurious rumours that he didn't even play on his own records – he was, in the mid Sixties, second only to Ringo Starr as the most famous drummer in the world. For it was not musical skill but Clark's single minded shrewdness as a businessman that steered him and his group to the top.

Having established a workable line-up under his leadership, he was to exercise complete control over every aspect of the Dave Clark Five until the group's break-up – and even beyond when he sold his recording rights to EMI for an enormous sum. He was manager, composer, even set designer, and if substitute drummers were ever required, it was because Clark, as producer, had to be at the mixing desk.

Impressed by his businesslike attitude, record companies allowed Clark more freedom than any pop musician of the time and some of the deals he secured were text-book cases of successful showbiz politics. For example, the Dave Clark Five were the first straight beat group to be signed to the powerful Harold Davidson agency – who also had Frank Sinatra on their books – and this guaranteed that they appeared on the prestigious Ed Sullivan Show more times than any British group before or since.

There was never any hint of pretension about the Dave Clark Five; they were a pop group, pure and simple, with a single motivation – to make money by getting product into the charts. And in this they succeeded, selling over 12 million records and gaining worldwide popularity.

Baritone and tenor

The Dave Clark Five were formed in Tottenham, North London, in 1958 by Clark and rhythm guitarist Rick Huxley as a backing group for singer Stan Saxon. By 1961 they had turned to mainstream pop material and had established the line-up that would remain until the end. Clark and Huxley (who had by now switched to playing bass) had taken on guitarist Lenny Davidson and Mike Smith, a formidable keyboard player and individual vocalist whose husky, powerful baritone was to become the group's most

Dave Clark points upwards to the group's greatest success.

consistent trademark. Furthermore, having recruited Denis Payton from a local jazz combo, the group were to be one of the few successful Sixties groups to include a tenor sax.

Initially, the Five were mainly an instrumental unit showcasing versions of Link Wray's 'Rumble' and Phil Upchurch's 'You Can't Sit Down' as well as their own rather derivative originals, such as their first single 'Chaquita' which was based on the Champs' 'Tequila'. Gradually, however, they began to include more vocal items. They listened to, and adapted, the songs of black vocal groups such as the Drifters and the Coasters as well as those of rock'n'roll artists like Chuck Berry – unaware that, only 200 miles away, the emergent Merseyside combos were drawing from similar sources for their repertoires.

In 1961, Clark secured a one-off deal with Ember Records that resulted in their undistinguished debut, 'Chaquita'. The following year the group signed to the Pye subsidiary, Piccadilly. Their first single for the new label, 'First Love', was again an instrumental and by the time Piccadilly had issued the group's first vocal attempt, 'I Knew It All The Time', the band had signed yet another recording contract, this time with Columbia, who saw the Dave Clark Five as a possible answer to the Beatles.

This more lucrative chapter in the group's history began with 'Mulberry Bush', a rocked-up version of the nursery rhyme, but even though they performed the song on 'Thank Your Lucky Stars', their first television appearance, it missed the charts. For a follow-up, the group selected 'Do You Love Me', a US hit for the Contours in 1962 and a song included in the repertoires of scores of beat groups. Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' more polished version reached the top of the charts, but the Dave Clark Five's own treatment managed to scrape in at Number 30 nonetheless.

Five on Broadway

In January 1964, Columbia's belief in the group proved to be justified when the rousing 'Glad All Over', written by Clark and Mike Smith, reached Number 1. The fact that the record had dislodged the Beatles' 'I Want To Hold Your Hand' from the top position guaranteed much media interest – 'Five Jive Crushes Beatle Beat' was one newspaper headline – and the group took every advantage of the publicity. Their clean-cut good looks and fashion sense, major assets in those chart-conscious days when teenage audiences needed to identify clearly with the corporate personality of their favoured stars, helped establish the group as a major force not only in Britain but in America too.

In February 'Glad All Over' entered *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred, eventually reaching Number 6, and on 8 March the group made their first appearance on the 'Ed Sullivan Show'. It was only after this debut performance on American nationwide television that Clark, cautious businessman that he was, decided the group could now turn fully professional.

Now that the Dave Clark Five had broken into the American market, they were lost to the UK concert platform forever – apart from a performance

Below: The Dave Clark Five: Mike Smith (keyboards), Lenny Davidson (guitar), Clark, Rick Huxley (bass) and Denis Payton (sax). The group traded on their clean-cut image and after they appeared on the 'Ed Sullivan Show' (inset below left), the TV host called them 'nice fellows'. Inset below right: Clark in the Seventies – a new hairstyle but similar music.

in the Royal Variety Show of 1965. Although they scrupulously plugged their singles on British TV, this was merely market research strategy for the States. For example, 'Look Before You Leap', released in May 1966, floundered at Number 50 for one week in the UK charts, but its B-side, 'Please Tell Me Why', promoted two months later as the A-side in the US, sailed effortlessly into the American Top Thirty.

Meanwhile, the success of 'Glad All Over' had been followed by a best-selling EP, *The Dave Clark Five*. Then, in the spring of 1964, came the rowdy 'Bits And Pieces', which reached Number 2 in the UK and Number 4 in the States. These early tracks all followed a similar formula: after a short preamble, the entire group hit their instruments at once while Smith, bawling rhyming couplets through an echo chamber, led the unison vocal responses. Their first album, *Session With The Dave Clark Five*, displayed greater stylistic diversification, ranging from covers of 'On Broadway' and 'Zip-A-Dee Doo-Dah', through folk-tinged originals like 'Can I Trust You' to the cinema muzak of 'Theme Without A Name'.

'Can't You See That She's Mine', taken from the album, was selected as the follow-up single to 'Bits And Pieces'. A less exuberant number than its predecessors, it reached Number 10 in the UK. The B-side, 'Because', was released as an A-side in the US and went to Number 3.

Business booms

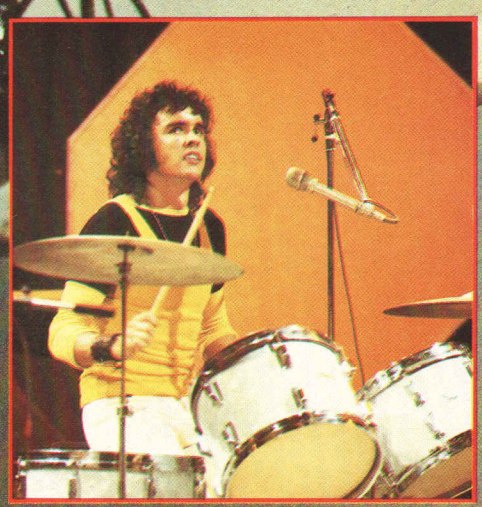
In the summer of 1965, the group made the obligatory venture into films with *Catch Us If You Can*. Directed by John Boorman, the movie was typical pop fare of young people standing up to old squares and featured a rather wooden performance from Clark himself. Nonetheless, the film was a success, particularly with American audiences, and the title track, issued as a single, put the group back into the UK Top Ten after a succession of flops.

By 1967, Clark was following an increasingly middle-of-the-road route, ignoring the possibilities presented by the psychedelic boom. Turning their backs on the teenage market, the group began to aim themselves at an older audience with offerings like 'Everybody Knows', a syrupy ballad written by Barry Mason and Les Reed (and sung by Lenny Davidson, as Mike Smith's rawer vocal style had proved unsuitable) and 'You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby'. The band had by now given up live performance, US sales were dwindling and their last few releases were characterised by a lack of consistent direction: 'Live In The Sky' was Clark and Smith's attempt at a football anthem, 'Good Old Rock'n'Roll' and 'More Good Old Rock'n'Roll' were, as the titles suggest, rock'n'roll medleys and 'Southern Man' was a curious mangling of the Neil Young song. Time was fast running out for the 'Tottenham sound'.

In 1971 the group disbanded, although Clark and Smith continued recording as Dave Clark and Friends for a further four years. But the break-up did not prevent posthumous chart action, for in the winter of 1977, at the height of the punk boom, *25 Thumping Great Hits* shot to the top of the UK album charts.

The Dave Clark Five were quite open about their intentions as they moved into the pop business, gave the teenagers what they wanted, made their money and got out again. They succeeded in both the British and American markets and, although they were capable of subtlety and experimentation, will always be remembered for those loud, stomping hits, all of which were charged with buoyant energy.

ALAN CLAYSON



The Dave Clark Five
Recommended Listening

Best Of Dave Clark (EMI Starline SRS 5037) (Includes: Do You Love Me, You've Got What It Takes, Catch Us If You Can, Bits And Pieces, Glad All Over, Try Too Hard, Can't You See That She's Mine).

Manchester Dreamers

The happy-go-lucky music of Freddie Garrity

FREDDIE AND THE DREAMERS were one of the least likely-looking collections of figures ever to establish themselves as teen idols. Yet with their contagious, though slight, pop numbers and their blending of music with slapstick comedy routines they succeeded in endearing themselves to record-buyers on both sides of the Atlantic and were, albeit for a brief period, among the top chart acts. Their material was highly varied, ranging from the pure corn territory of 'Short Shorts' and 'Do The Freddie' through ballads like 'I Understand' to rock standards such as 'Johnny B. Goode' and 'Kansas City'. But always there was an element of mischievous music-hall comedy and so the group tended to appeal to a younger audience than most of their contemporaries. And it was unsurprising that, once the hits had dried up, they were able to continue a successful career in cabaret and summer seasons.

Freddie Garrity was born in Manchester on 14 November 1940. By the time he had reached his teens, he had developed an interest in singing and music-hall type humour – an interest borne out when, in 1956, he won first prize (a razor) in a talent contest at the Locarno Ballroom, Sale, for his impression of Al Jolson performing 'April Showers'. By then, however, his attention had been captured by the sound of skiffle; he had heard Lonnie Donegan's 'Rock Island Line' on the radio and, having bought a guitar for £5, he decided to form a group of his own.

Along the milky way

The instrumentation of Garrity's group, the Red Sox, consisted of washboard, guitar, and tea-chest bass played by Freddie's brother Derek. Together the group assembled a repertoire of cover versions of songs by such heroes as Donegan, Elvis Presley and Little Richard which they rehearsed in Garrity's living room. Despite touring the Manchester area with some success, and coming second in the Northwest Skiffle Championships, the career of the Red Sox was brief, and Freddie soon moved on to singing on a semi-professional basis with other local skiffle bands, the John Norman Four and, later, the Kingfishers.

The Kingfishers were led by rhythm guitarist Roy Crewsdon (born 29 May 1941); other group members were Derek Quinn (born 24 May 1942) on lead guitar, drummer Bernie Dwyer (born 11 Septem-

Inset opposite top: The famous leap was only one of the many gimmicks of Freddie's stage act. Inset opposite: Three Dreamers, from left Roy Crewsdon, Pete Birrell and Derek Quinn. Inset left: A television appearance. Left: The group surrounded by milling teenagers at a huge 'Mod Ball'.

ber 1940) and bass player Pete Birrell (born 9 May 1941). By 1959, Garrity had established himself as focal point and frontman, and the group's name had been changed to Freddie and the Dreamers. Playing the north-west club circuit, the band gradually began to develop the comic nature of their stage performance.

With his weakling build, curly hair and heavy spectacles, Freddie was hardly the typical pop star. To compensate, he would send himself up with a permanent grin, high-pitched shrieks, leaps into the air and, on occasion, would drop his trousers. His fellow group-members were equally odd looking: Crewsdon was somewhat lacking in hair, Birrell was portly and Quinn always sported a pair of ill-fitting sun-glasses. Moreover, they would execute silly leg movements behind Garrity's antics. These dances were, initially, intended as send-ups of the Shadows as Freddie recalled: 'I wanted to joke around with the Shadows' image so we kicked our legs from side to side like we were walking through a muddy field lifting our legs along the way.'

While steadily building a following around the Manchester area, the Dreamers continued with their day jobs – Freddie pursued a succession of odd jobs including brush salesman, shoe salesman and milkman – until, in 1963, they successfully auditioned for the BBC. Appearances on children's television were followed by an audition for the Columbia label, for whom the group performed a version of the James Ray hit 'If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody', complete with comedy routine. They were duly rewarded with a recording contract. Released in April 1963, 'If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody' gained the group further TV exposure and reached Number 3 in the UK charts.

What a crazy world

Motivated by this considerable early success, Garrity looked for an appropriate writing partner and expressed interest in collaborating with Mitch Murray who was, at the time, writing with Gerry Marsden of the Pacemakers. Together they wrote 'I'm Telling You Now', which went to Number 2 in August. This was followed three months later by 'You Were Made For Me', written by Murray alone, a Number 3 success.

Garrity had no illusions about the quality of the song content. 'What sold the records was the silly routine – the image was the whole thing,' he said. By 1964, the strength of that image appeared to be on the wane; 'Over You' and a version of Paul Anka's 1957 hit 'I Love You Baby' failed to reach the Top Ten and 'Just For You' could only achieve a modest Number 41 placing.

However, the group were by now pursuing a successful career in films. In 1963 they had appeared in the Joe Brown film *What A Crazy World* alongside Marty Wilde and Susan Maughan and the following year they underlined their comic appeal with roles in *Every Day's A Holiday*. Along with pop stars John Leyton, Mike Sarne and the Mojos, this tale of holiday camp high-jinks starred such comic actors as Ron Moody, Liz Fraser, Richard O'Sullivan and Nicholas Parsons and featured the Dreamers as the camp's accident-prone chefs. In 1965, furthermore, Freddie and the Dreamers were the headlining stars of an instantly forgettable short, *Cuckoo Patrol*.

Back in the charts

At the end of 1964, the group managed to recapture their former chart glory when 'I Understand', a ballad first recorded by the Four Tunes 10 years previously, reached Number 5. 'I Understand' was to be the group's last UK Top Ten entry, but further success awaited them in America.

With the British invasion sweeping the States, Freddie and the Dreamers soon secured American bookings. Early in 1965 they appeared on the pop programme 'Hullabaloo' performing 'I'm Telling You Now'. The song and the impish dance routine captured the imagination of American youth and, two years after its British success, 'I'm Telling You Now' went to Number 1 in *Billboard*'s Hot Hundred. This was followed in rapid succession by four further US chart entries – 'You Were Made For Me', 'I Understand', 'Do The Freddie' and 'A Little You'. But by the end of 1965, Freddie and the Dreamers had simply faded away in the US, to be replaced by Hermans Hermits.

Although the records of Freddie and the Dreamers made no significant impact on the course of rock, their humour and sense of fun remain a fond piece of nostalgia and the group kept working in cabaret, summer seasons and pantomime until they finally split up at the end of the Sixties. They continued to record singles and albums until 1967, covering everything from '59th Street Bridge Song' to 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'. Freddie and the Dreamers were among the first UK bands to attempt to bridge pop forms with comedy, and as such their entertainment value was always high. BARBARA CHARONE

Freddie and the Dreamers
Recommended Listening

Best Of Freddie And The Dreamers (EMI NUT11) (Includes: I'm Telling You Now, Playboy, If You've Got A Minute Baby, Short Shorts, Over You, I Understand, If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody, Do The Freddie, What Have I Done To You, Don't Make Me Cry, You Were Made For Me, I Don't Love You Anymore, Tell Me When, Just For You, A Little You, I Just Don't Understand, I'm A Hog For You, Johnny B. Goode, I Love You Baby, It Doesn't Matter Anymore).

Garrity, Crewsdon and Birrell relax between studio takes.

The DAGENHAM SOUND

Was Brian Poole wrong to leave the Tremeloes?

IN JANUARY 1962, a cluster of starry-eyed pop acts, virtually unknown except to their neighbours, arrived at Decca Records' studios in West Hampstead, London, for routine audition sessions. The prize for the lucky one was a record contract and the chance of national fame.

Two groups stood out, in the opinion of Mike Smith, Decca recording manager. One was the Beatles, and he had given them high marks a few weeks earlier when he'd seen them in action at the Cavern in their native Liverpool. The other band was Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, from Dagenham, Essex. This group had been formed a couple of years earlier and was fronted by a likeable Cockney who loved impersonating his hero, Buddy Holly, even to the extent of sporting similar spectacles.

Mike Smith would have signed both to Decca but he was told he could have only one. Preferring a local group – who, it was thought, would be more readily available for studio work – Smith signed up Brian Poole and the Tremeloes to a recording contract.

The first single, 'Lost Love'/'Twist Little Sister', released early in 1962 created few waves of interest, however. This was followed by a useful and lively album, *Big Hits Of 1962*, a budget Ace of Clubs release consisting of covers of the hits of the day.

Twisting Tremeloes

The record that established Brian Poole and the Tremeloes was 'Twist And Shout' – suggested, ironically enough, by the Beatles' rendition on their first LP, *Please Please Me*. Whereas the Beatles had attacked the song with fierce and spontaneous enthusiasm, Brian Poole adopted a more contrived approach. But the resultant single raced to Number 4 in the UK charts and was fast followed by a Number 1 hit, 'Do You Love Me', which also featured the gravelly Poole voice. This Berry Gordy composition had earlier been an American hit for the Contours.

Through Decca publicity and promotion, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes were portrayed as southern England's answer to the Beatles and all the other groups involved in the Merseybeat explosion. The name 'Poole' was featured to suggest the band had some links with Liverpool and Brian himself dropped the Holly-style spectacles and opted for contact lenses and a change in image, although it did little to help him into the Lennon-McCartney class as a visual attraction.

Fresh-faced boys from Dagenham, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes put on their best smiles for the camera.

A great strength of the group was its well integrated and steady line-up: Brian Poole singing in front of lead guitarist Ricky West, fresh-faced and strong on personality; drummer Dave Munden; bassist Alan Howard, fair-haired and tall; and Alan Blakely, probably the best musician, operating mostly as rhythm guitarist.

Released in November 1963, 'I Can Dance' was only a minor success, although 'Candy Man', a previous hit for Roy Orbison, made Number 6 in the charts in March 1964. 'Someone Someone', an old Crickets B-side, was an even bigger hit and reached Number 2. This was followed in August 1964 by 'Twelve Steps To Love' which only made Number 32. In 1965 'Three Bells' and 'I Want Candy' reached Numbers 17 and 25 respectively.

Towards the end of 1965 the group began to lose direction. Brian Poole, rather foolishly in the opinion of many, decided to embark on a solo career. The last few singles with the group had hardly been blockbusters and he thought he might just make it on his own. For their part, the group decided to carry on with the same name and personnel.

The year 1966 was a bleak one. Brian Poole struggled to get his act together and the Tremeloes, reorganising the vocal duties on a share-and-share-alike basis, failed to chart with their first two releases 'Blessed' and 'Good Day Sunshine'.

Going solo did indeed prove a mistake for Brian Poole, who was a hard-working singer of better than average ability but not a pop superstar. He was basically a shy person who was unsure of himself when caught up in the frenzy of stardom. He'd studied piano and guitar but played neither on stage because he felt he was not good enough. What he really lacked was the kind of confidence needed to bolster talent in the pop scene of the Sixties. His own idol was Bobby Darin, admired mostly for his versatility. But Poole was short on versatility, and it showed. Failing to make the big time, he faded into obscurity.

While Brian Poole headed for a premature retirement and returned to the family butchery business, 1967 saw an upsurge in the fortunes of the Tremeloes. Moving from Decca to CBS they found the magic touch again. 'Here Comes My Baby' entered the charts in February 1967 and peaked at Number 4. The song reached Number 13 in America and sold more than a million copies worldwide. The immediate follow-up, 'Silence Is Golden', did even better and became the British Number 1 on 18 May.

Chip cashes in

Where the Tremeloes scored was in their ability to get across a cheery sort of atmosphere on their singles. The vocal sound, without the often raucous content of Brian Poole's delivery, was confident and versatile. And the group's success was certainly helped by the arrival of Chip Hawkes, the new front man, who sang and played bass (Alan Howard having quit) and whose good looks generally acted as female fan fodder. Indeed, their strong visual appeal was an undoubted asset when appearing on television shows like 'Top Of The Pops', which did much to promote groups like the Tremeloes.

'Even The Bad Times Are Good', a classic straightforward commercial pop song penned by Mitch Murray and Peter Callendar, made Number 4 in August 1967. The Tremeloes continued to prosper in 1968: 'Suddenly You Love Me' in January and 'My Little Lady' in September both made Number 6. The following year '(Call Me) Number One' just failed to top the charts, reaching Number 2. In a run which went through to the middle of 1971, the Tremeloes chalked up nine Top Twenty hits – against the five they'd scored with Brian Poole.

Their future seemingly assured as a good-time pop band, the Tremeloes suddenly made an about-face in the early Seventies. To the astonishment of the band's management, record company and fans, they claimed that all their early records had been rubbish, that they had produced only music for morons, and they announced that in future the world could expect 'progressive' and thoughtful popular music from the Tremeloes.

Naturally, this new approach did not go down well with the faithful fans who, apart from going along either to ogle Chip Hawkes or to enjoy the show, had apparently been forking out hard-earned cash for 'moronic rubbish'. Despite their avowed intention the Tremeloes failed to make the transition from Sixties pop group to Seventies rock band. On a recording level they certainly failed to come out with anything 'progressive'.

On the cabaret circuit

Out of the public eye the Tremeloes went the way of the cabaret circuit, rehashing their old hits for ageing audiences. The band began to disintegrate: Ricky West was out of the band for two years, Chip Hawkes quit at the end of 1974 to made a solo album in Nashville and Alan Blakely also decided to call it a day. Replacements were never able to recapture the old Tremeloes sound and there were no further chart entries.

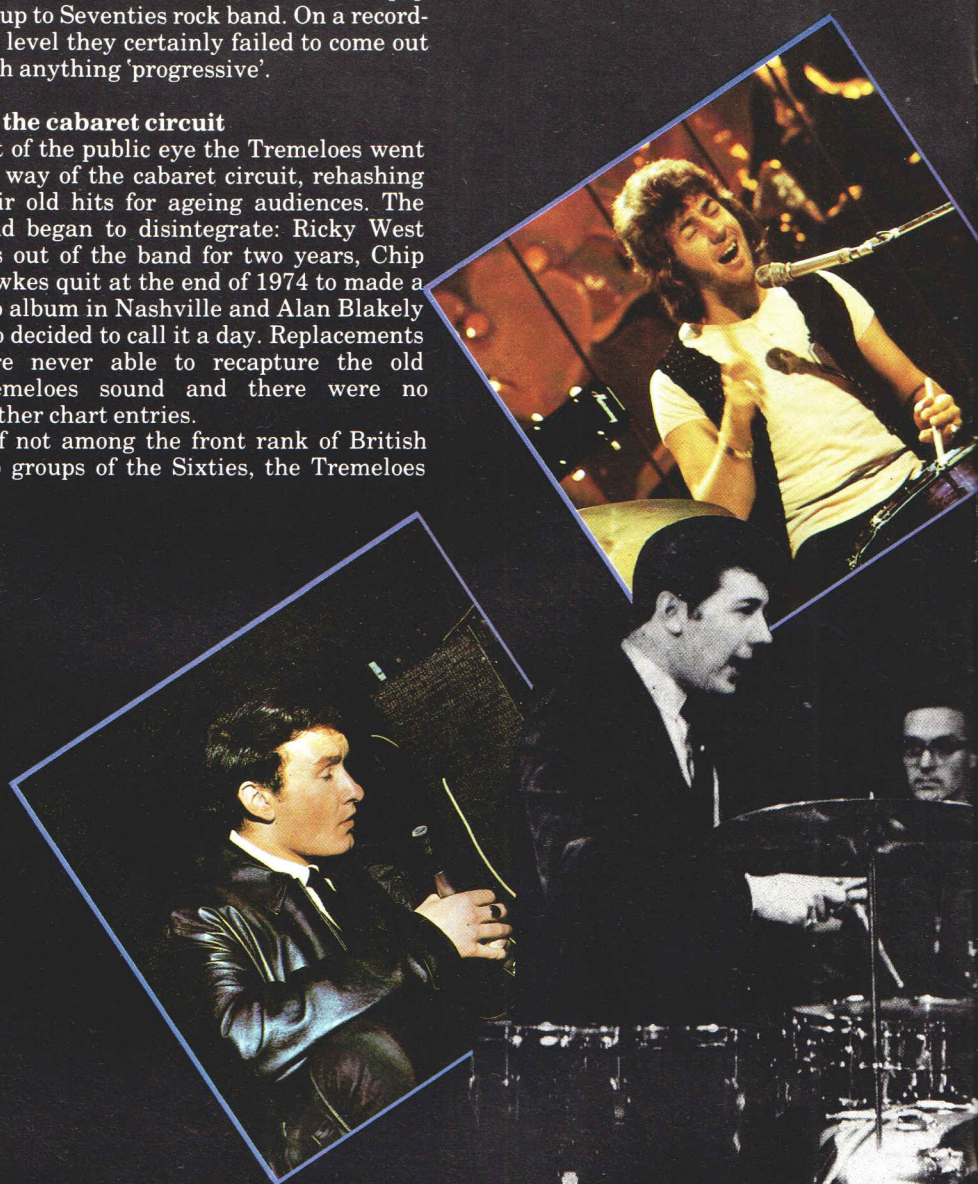
If not among the front rank of British pop groups of the Sixties, the Tremeloes were nevertheless very polished performers. Before they made their bizarre change of career to become a 'progressive' rock group the Tremeloes – with and without Brian Poole – released a succession of good-natured and well-crafted pop singles that gave pleasure to many. That in itself was no mean achievement.

PETER JONES

The Tremeloes
Recommended Listening

Tremeloes Greatest Hits (CBS 64206) (Includes: Here Comes My Baby, Silence Is Golden, Good Day Sunshine, Even The Bad Times Are Good, Suddenly You Love Me, I Shall Be Released).

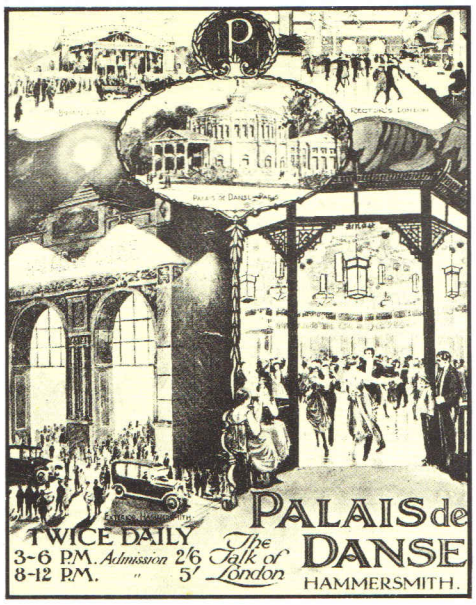
Below: The early Tremeloes during a television programme. Insets from left: Brian Poole testing his microphone; singing drummer Dave Munden; a mournful-looking Alan Blakely; heart-throb and bass player Chip Hawkes, and lead guitarist Ricky West. The latter four comprised the group which had great success during the late Sixties.



SATURDAY NIGHT OUT

The ballrooms where British beat took shape

FOR MOST SINGERS and groups in the early Sixties, chart success alone was no guarantee of finanacial security. While pop acts might well expect to earn fair royalties from a Top Twenty hit, their main day-to-day income – which paid for basics like equipment and stage clothes as well as a manager – came not from records but from the hard slog of 'live' dates. A good manager saw his principal function as keeping his artists in regular work, preferably night after night, even if that entailed travelling from one end of the country to the other in the course of a day. Ballrooms, in particular, were a prime source of reputation-building 'live' work; such dates were often a bridge between local gigs and a coveted place on a big theatre tour with up to a dozen other acts, and they gave many groups the satisfaction of playing to large audiences for the first time. Ballroom patrons were treated to a wide range of talent indeed.



Top: The Dave Clark Five on the ballroom circuit before their move to America. Above: One of the first advertisements for the Hammersmith Palais.

The ballrooms themselves were mainly large, ornate buildings with names to match – the Locarno, Lyceum, Adelphi, Palais, Empress, Scala or Majestic – and most dated from the days when social success depended on one's mastery of the Foxtrot and Tango. The Hammersmith Palais de Danse, opened in 1919, was the first of its kind and by the late Thirties virtually every town in Britain had its equivalent, each playing host to touring dance bands and acting as a focus for the community's social life. Some closed after the Second World War in response to escalating costs and changing social patterns, while many that survived were taken over by new leisure corporations like Granada and Top Rank, which had interests ranging from bingo to cinema.

With the decline in formal dancing, the halls had to adapt to stay in business; some were turned into skating rinks or ten-pin bowling alleys, but others adapted by continuing to stage shows featuring well-known middle-of-the-road singers like Ronnie Hilton and Lita Roza. The demise of the music-hall circuit in the

Fifties left such acts without a major source of exposure, so the ballrooms assumed a new importance that lasted through the rock'n'roll era and well into the Sixties.

Girls and gangs

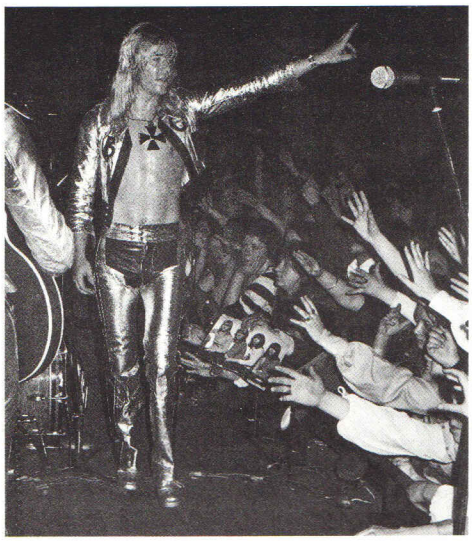
The so-called 'ballroom circuit' was in fact something of a misnomer, because the circuit included not only dance halls but town halls, sports centres, welfare halls and even public baths and lidos, where the swimming pools had to be specially boarded over for each performance. Common to all these venues was a deliberate absence of seating, not only to encourage dancing but to maximise audience capacity, and a booking policy that cut right across the pop spectrum – only at a ballroom or equivalent could you expect to see the Rolling Stones one week and Kathy Kirby the next. There was something innately democratic about such a policy and, indeed, about the ballrooms themselves as places of entertainment: they were the only places where pop fans could regularly hear quality 'live' music for a single-price admission, and they made even top bands like the Stones and the Who accessible to fans in the farthest corners of the country.

They also had a clear advantage over the cinemas and theatres which hosted the big-name concert tours in that they were centres of social activity. For thousands of British teenagers, a Friday-night visit to the local ballroom was the leisure highlight of the week, no matter who was actually appearing there, as it offered untold opportunities for boozing with friends, meeting the opposite sex or even getting involved in the occasional gang-fight.

The ballrooms enjoyed their greatest period of popularity between 1963 and 1966, in the wake of the massive new interest in pop that the Beatles and others helped to create. Ironically, however, it was the ever-expanding success of the major British groups that eventually proved the downfall of the ballroom circuit, as many of the groups forsook the dance halls for more lucrative concert tours and – ultimately – the huge American market. For both artists and managers, ballrooms became simply a stepping stone to bigger and better things and, once a singer or band had graduated beyond them with a few hit records and a spot on a tour, there was absolutely no going back. Slowly but surely, therefore, the ballrooms were robbed of the best rock names and had to be increasingly content with second division acts of somewhat lesser box-office appeal.

There were other reasons for the ballrooms' steady fall from grace, however, and what happened to the California Ballroom in Dunstable – one of the key venues on the south-of-England circuit – forms a typical case history. The California was built in 1960 as an extension to a leisure complex that already included a swimming pool, go-kart racing track and skating rink, and for several years its profits effectively subsidised the other ventures. The Rolling Stones performed there for £25 early in 1964, just as 'Not Fade Away' was entering the charts, and other star names to appear there included Lulu, Brenda Lee, Adam Faith, Stevie Wonder, Dusty Springfield, the Drifters, local band the Barron Knights, Connie Francis and James Brown. The California's location – just 30 miles from London – gave it a more than local importance and at one period special coaches brought in fans from nearby towns like Luton, Aylesbury, Bedford and St Albans.

The California's solid reputation meant it could survive the loss of top British groups better than most, but problems began to mount around 1966. By this time, even the minor-league groups were demanding high fees as a matter of course – they were well aware of the bigger sums to be earned elsewhere – and admission charges had to be persistently increased to keep up with inflation. Pop tastes were changing too, with many of the newer bands – notably those emerging from the London clubs – playing music that was hardly suited to the ballroom ambiance. The puzzled faces and cool reaction of the seasoned ballroom-goers to the Pink Floyd, who appeared at the California during the first half of 1967, gave an early indication of the split in tastes to come. The new progressive bands and the old dance-hall venues just did not go together, and such bands turned to the colleges and universities for more sympathetic audiences to entertain.



Below: Brenda Lee appearing at the California Ballroom in December 1964, watched by an interested but rather reserved audience – a striking contrast to the reception afforded teenybop idols the Sweet (left) a decade later.

The problem was partly one of facilities, as ballrooms were not physically equipped to cope with the massive amplifiers, complex instrumentation and ingenious light shows that the progressive groups brought with them. More significantly, though, the new progressive music had a supposed intellectual value that demanded rapt attention and a passivity of response. Ballroom audiences, largely working-class and more used to appreciating music with their feet than with their minds, had little patience with such pomposity – and frequently showed it.

Progress and decline

Progressive rock had a huge impact. Even some of those groups who had come up through the ballrooms deserted them for the newly-established college circuit, while 1967 saw the last days of the multi-artist theatre tour, killed by mammoth running costs and changing musical fashions. With promoters and agents ceasing to book their acts into the ballrooms, some closed while others changed their policies. The California's response, which

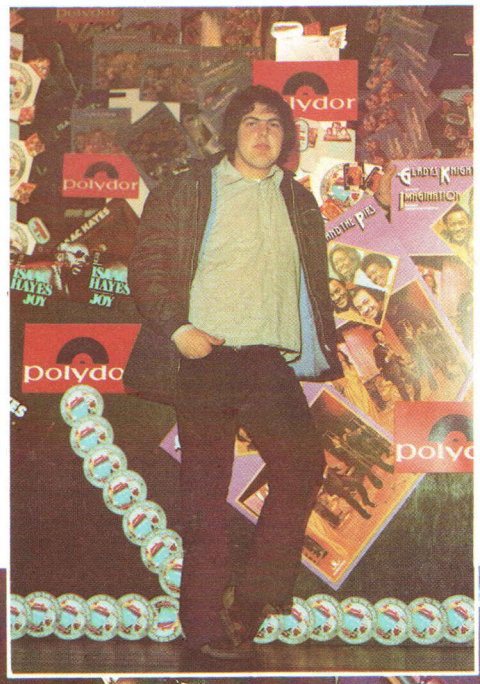
was followed by a number of independently owned dance halls, was to specialise in the one style of music whose popularity was in no way affected by the rise of progressive rock: American soul. So the California only presented mainstream British rock when it could be sure of a profit resulting.

Given that Dunstable's Queensway Hall (opened as a rock venue in 1967) was now presenting a weekly diet of the new rock, the decision made sense. By specialising, the ballroom retained the loyalty of its hard-core following and was also able to attract many of the top soul stars, from Wilson Pickett to the Four Tops. The California, in fact, became the traditional starting point for a soul artist's British tour and one of only a handful of important soul venues south of Birmingham.

Discos and cabaret

Other ballrooms suffered a more ignominious fate. Some were converted into skating rinks or banqueting halls, while others became discothèques or nightclubs. In social terms, the disco was the logical successor to the ballroom, attracting the same strongly working-class clientele and placing the emphasis squarely back on dancing; its advantage over ballrooms was mainly financial, as playing records was immeasurably cheaper than hiring 'live' bands. Discothèques proliferated in the north of England, where the 'northern soul' movement quietly gathered momentum and became a subculture in its own right between the late Sixties and mid Seventies.

The conversion of some dance-halls into cabaret centres, meanwhile, was ironic, because many of those groups who had not taken the progressive route after 1967 were obliged to take their place on the cabaret gravy train just to keep earning. Cabaret was one of the very few money-making outlets for 'live' music in the late Sixties, though playing the night-club circuit inevitably meant having to master a repertoire of tired old popular music standards and comedy routines. Very few former chart acts survived.



The ballroom circuit thrived in the Sixties because it reflected the overall unity in pop taste so well: when tastes began to polarise and the very philosophy of pop music began to change, it lost both its social and musical importance. Ballrooms were very much products of an era and it was in an attempt to re-create the spirit of the pre-1967 years that a 'ballroom circuit' of sorts was re-launched in the late Seventies, at the height of the 2-Tone ska/New Wave movement.

A ballroom environment certainly suited the music of Madness, the Specials, Bad Manners and others, symbolically breaking down the barriers between audience and performers and encouraging participation, and the move coincided with an opening up of smaller venues to rock bands in general. Some of the old ballrooms found a new lease of life – the Hammersmith Palais, for instance, once more became a major London rock venue – but the ballroom movement of the late Seventies was more a gesture to pop democracy than a conscious effort to get the old venues reopened.

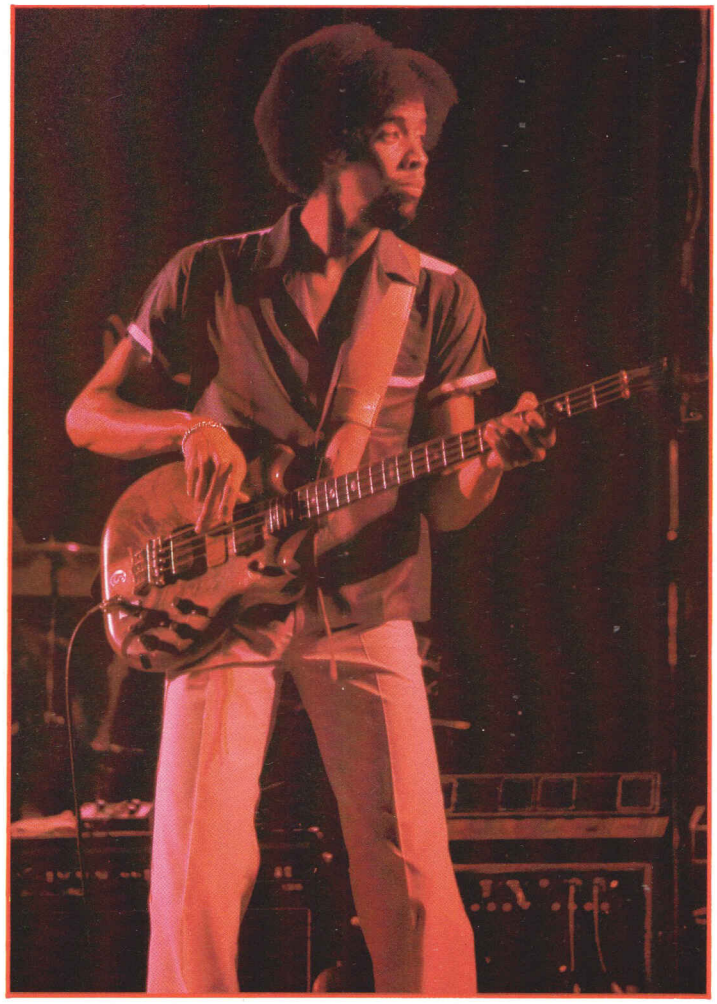
By the Eighties, most towns had lost their ballrooms for good, while those that survived still tended to specialise in soul, rockabilly or country music. Sometimes, as in the case of the Royalty in Southgate, a surviving ballroom specialised in all three. As for the California, after repeated changes in management during the Seventies, the venue finally closed on New Year's Eve, 1979. The building was demolished to be replaced by a housing estate.

STEPHEN BARNARD

Right: Mick Ilka, responsible for programming at the California during the Seventies. Below: The stage is set for Slade's appearance in 1973.

THE GREAT MUSICIANS

Stanley Clarke



Initially an acoustic double bass player, Stanley Clarke moved over to the electric instrument in the early Seventies, favouring the Alembic bass guitar (above). Overleaf: Clarke playing with 'occasional' rock group the New Barbarians.

When Stanley Clarke first appeared on the music scene in 1972, it was as a jazz-rock bassist; few observers would then have thought that ten years later he would be part of the disco-funk school of musicians. It was at venues like Ronnie Scott's jazz club that British musicians came in the early Seventies to gasp and wonder at his apparently effortless playing – fingers spidering all over the double bass as he cruised, smiling, through the music of Chick Corea's band, an offshoot of the then all-important Miles Davis jazz-rock family tree.

The album which shows that period most characteristically is probably *Light As A Feather*. On the title-track the bass is nimble and fleet-footed, perfectly fitting that very title. Stanley plays with obvious joy, loping along, giving every beat a little boost, complementing the other instruments harmonically and melodically. On the extended track 'Spain' he displays how well he can play his part in a more structured composition, switching from easy-swinging sections to tight unison passages, and soloing in the jazz tradition of bass-players like Charles Mingus and Scott La Faro, both mentioned in the past by Clarke as important musical influences.

The next year, 1973, saw him taking the major step of concentrating more on electric bass. This paralleled the change of Corea's band as a whole – now renamed Return To Forever. The more restrained jazz elements of the music were edged out by more and more high-energy jazz-rock compositions, dense arrangements with the drums keeping up the pressure behind fast unison playing by the bass, keyboards and guitar – a unified sound with less space and air. Of course Clarke was well able to handle the speed and complexity, but there were many former fans who found both the band's new image and Stanley's electric sound disappointing. After the singing acoustic tone of his double bass, the rather muddy, groaning bass guitar seemed a backward step made for the sake of commerciality.

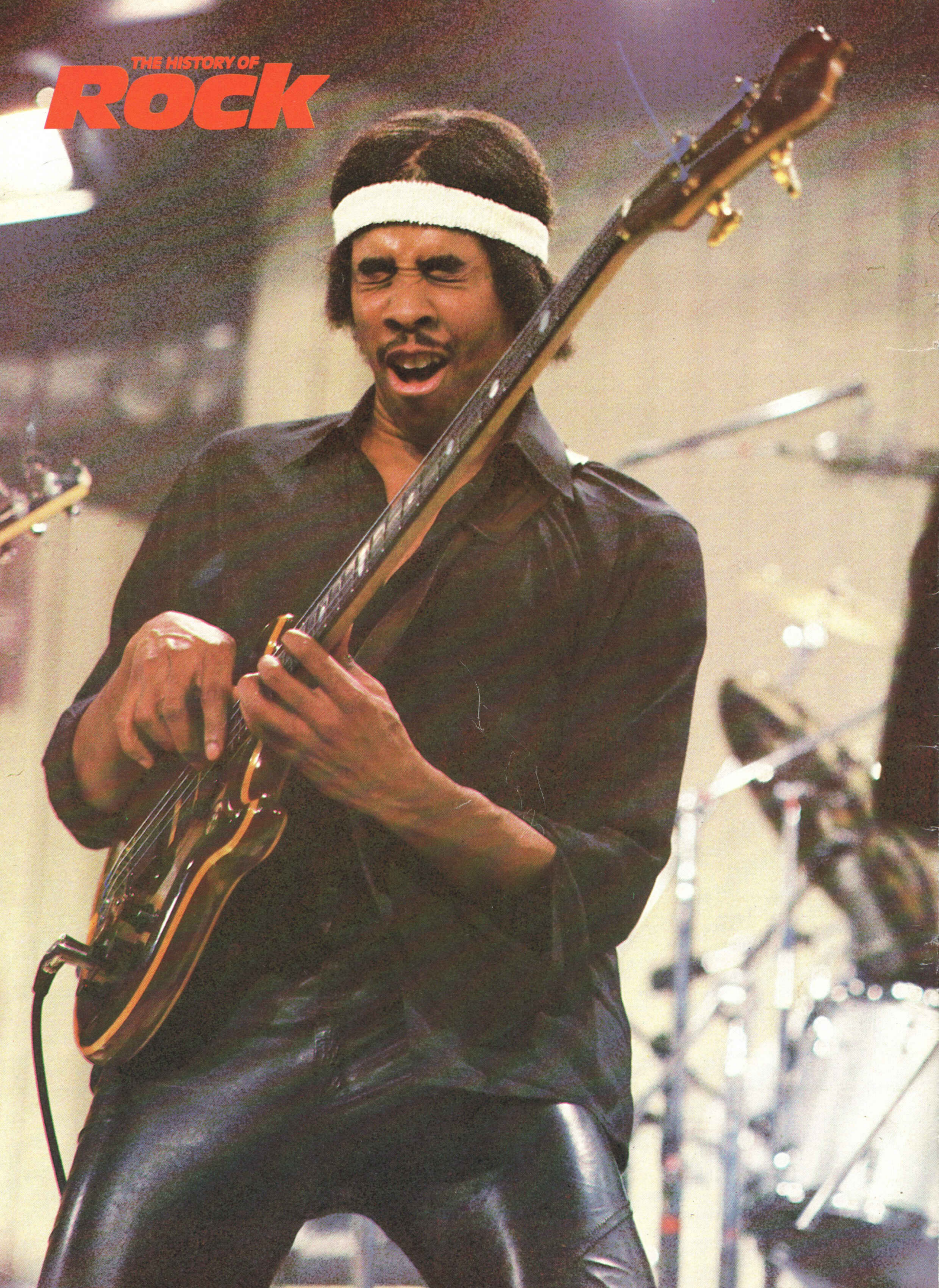
But the other side of the coin was that many audiences who would never have entered jazz clubs now got to hear his superb technique and to watch the band having a good time together on stage. A Return To Forever gig was a couple of hours of warm, happy energy, and all of it with no outward sign of hard work. Clarke and Corea would play quizzical face-games with each other while whipping out the most outrageous unison parts at lightning tempo, as if they were merely miming to the music, barely glancing at their instruments.

As well as the regular output of LPs from Return To Forever, the bassist released his first solo album, *Stanley Clarke*, in 1974. Many feel this to be the peak of his musical creativity, showing off all the facets of his playing – still with a toehold in jazz, but having mastered the potentially very different approach of the bass guitar, and furthermore making that instrument do things it had never done before. On 'Lopsy Lu' Clarke picked up a style suggested by Sly Stone's bassist, Larry Graham, and refined it to such a degree that every bass guitarist for the next five years felt obliged to attempt it on any track with a medium funky feel: slapping and teasing the strings to get that spiky hiccupping sound – almost tuned percussion. Another facet of Clarke's style that came to light was his use of tremeloed harmonics – striking the high overtones of the strings and bending the note by pressing on the portion of the string beyond the nut. The effect is of a very vocal, slowly-fading wail several octaves above the bass guitar's normal range.

The other side of Clarke's interests is well represented on that record by the extended bass solo on 'Spanish Phases For Strings And Bass' and his gentle playing on 'Yesterday Princess', which also introduced him as a vocalist. But his subsequent output moved further and further away from the jazz influence with the albums *Journey To Love* and *Schooldays*. *Journey To Love* featured the guitar playing of Jeff Beck, who contributed much to the album, although the most satisfying number was Clarke's collaboration with Chick Corea and John McLaughlin on the superb 'Song To John'. The next album, *Schooldays*, reinforced this move towards rock and was characterised by an all-electric feel that at times, unfortunately, veered towards pomp-rock.

With the dissolution of Return To Forever in the late Seventies, Stanley became more and more a star in his own right, slipping in and out of various supergroups on record and in concert. His partnership with keyboard player George Duke led to the 1981 release *Stanley Clarke-George Duke Project*, which was virtually a pure disco album with the bass parts played on synthesiser. Since 1980 Clarke has tended to play more guitar and piccolo bass than real bottom-end bass and it remains to be seen whether he will return to his former role as bass virtuoso.

HUGH HOPPER

THE HISTORY OF

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